

# **Observations on the Swiss Background of the Kunz Family**

**By**

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In February 1762, Niklaus Kunz (1730-1808) and Margaritha Klossner (1733- 1805), second cousins once removed and both from the Bernese alpine hamlet of Zwischenflueh, marry in a double ceremony (along with Niklaus' sister and Margaritha's brother) in the parish Reformed Church in Diemtigen. Two years later Reverend David Spruengli (1723-1777) describes the conditions within the Diemtigen parish in 1764 in a report requested by the government of the Republic of Bern.

Spruengli maintains that the land in the entire parish (130 km<sup>2</sup>) is among the best in the entire canton for cattle breeding and that the inhabitants therefore traditionally raise stock. Grains and potatoes are seldom planted inasmuch as the populace live mainly from milk products. Their welfare is almost entirely dependent upon the breeding of cattle. Spruengli complains about the effect of imported luxury goods: "... however [their prosperity is] deprived somewhat through [the use of] wine and tobacco, even more from bread and the ostentatiousness which continues to gain ground." Spruengli considers bread as morally corrupt, presumably because only the wealthy cattle breeders and cheesemakers are able to afford to purchase enough imported grain to have ground into flour by a miller.

Niklaus and Margaritha Kunz and their seven children live in the old family home called *Tschuppis* at Narrenbach on the valley floor in Zwischenflueh. Two sons and two daughters die young, both girls in an epidemic in the summer of 1775. Of the three sons who marry and raise families of their own, Jakob is the youngest.

Jakob Kunz (1774-1841) marries Margaritha Klossner (1779-1818), his third cousin, on February 6, 1798, in the Diemtigen parish church. Margaritha's father, Jakob Klossner (1745-1819), lives with his family in their home *auf dem Laden* in that area of Zwischenflueh known as Oeyen. As a respected and God-fearing citizen of the hamlet, he represents Zwischenflueh for a time as a judge on the Diemtigen Consistory Court. The main function of that ecclesiastical institution of the state controlled church is to oversee the morals of the parishioners and mete out punishments as deemed necessary. Peter Klossner (1705-1790), Margaritha's grandfather, and his uncle, Jakob Klossner (1673-1743), also serve the church as consistory judges.

Jakob and Margaritha Kunz make their home at *Tschuppis* along with Jakob's elder brother, Christian Kunz (1767-1838), and his family; Niklaus Kunz (1764-1832), their eldest brother, lives with his family nearby at *Rossacker*. Exactly one month after Jakob and Margaritha Kunz's marriage, Napoleon's troops begin their occupation of Bern and the Republic. The first son and daughter of Jakob and Margaritha Kunz die a few months after birth in 1799 and 1800; a second son is born in 1802. Their third son, Johannes Kunz (1803-1871), known by his posterity in the United States as John Kunz I, is born on the *Tschuppis* farm on September 16, 1803.

Prior to assuming his new duties as pastor at Reutigen in the late summer of 1805, Reverend Johann Jakob Engemann (1748-1823) compiles a lengthy report of his observations during the 32 years of his service in the Diemtigen parish. He believes that the affluence has increased, evidently due to the marriage politics practiced by the wealthy citizens. That which the poor no longer have, has come into the hands of others who have become prosperous, "...the happy middle class is declining too much."

Engemann notes that considerably more produce is being planted than when he came to Diemtigen, " ... more bread is eaten than before... luxury has also increased." He mentions much larger houses and their expensive and luxurious furnishings, the fancy foods, and more costly clothes. "... The young men look like they come from the cities ... all hair fashions, as well as others, are being copied. No wealthy farmer neglects to send his children to the French-speaking cantons; boys are now even being sent to expensive boarding schools and receiving an education formerly known only by the sons of the aristocracy.

Through the centuries and certainly by the beginning of the 19th century when Engemann writes his impressions of the Diemtigen parishioners, the Kunzes form a part of the rapidly declining middle class. The family name is nevertheless well respected because of its roots in the neighboring parish of Erlenbach in Simmental, where Peter Kunz ( -1544), the reformer of the lower Simmental canyon, is born. He studies in the monastery in Interlaken and later serves as the last Catholic priest in his home parish of Erlenbach.

Peter Kunz is among the theologians attending the reformatory movement debates of the Baden Disputation in May 1526. As a result he gains contact with the eminent Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). In August 1526, Kunz signs a letter to Zwingli as "your till before the altar [of covenants]". On May 13, 1527, supported by the voting male population of the Lower Simmental District over 14 years of age, Peter Kunz proclaims the Reformation of the district. That same year Diemtigen is divided from the Erlenbach parish and becomes an independent ecclesiastical unit in preparation of the Reformation which becomes law throughout the Republic on February 7, 1528. Although Kunz's ideas concerning the Bernese State Church are respected by the early reformers in Germanic-speaking Europe, Jean Calvin (1509-1564), whose ideas of reform in Geneva are entirely different, is one of Kunz's harshest critics.

During the years following the birth of Johannes Kunz (John I), four more brothers and two sisters join the family in the ancestral home at *Tschuppis*. Neither Johannes nor his brothers and sisters attend boarding schools or further their education through a sojourn in the French-speaking area of Switzerland. No doubt Jakob and Margaritha Kunz send their children as often as possible to the local school in the hamlet of Zwischenflueh (Margaritha Klossner Kunz's great-grandfather, Lieutenant Peter Klossner [1676-1733], is noted as the schoolmaster in Zwischenflueh in 1729). Reverend Spruengli complains of the poor school attendance due to the extraordinary distances between the scattered farms and the schools, the harsh winters and bad paths. According to Engemann, not much changes in the following forty-one years, "... however they must be excused in winter because of the vast distance, often because of deep snow, the difficult paths, bad weather; in summer, because of living on higher [alpine] mountains."

Tragedy strikes the family at *Tschuppis* on Christmas day in 1818 when shortly before turning forty, Margaritha Klossner Kunz dies giving premature birth to her eleventh child, who is stillborn. Johannes is 15 years old, his youngest brother not quite three. The anguish and despair which Jakob Kunz senses through the early loss of his wife and the mother of his eight surviving children mellows only through his devoutness and piety.

Seventeen year-old Johannes Kunz (John I) becomes the first of his brothers and sisters to wed when he marries his second cousin from the steep mountainside farm *auf der Blatten* above Zwischenflueh. His marriage to Rosina Katharina Klossner (1802-1883), whose mother (Rosina Minnig Klossner [1767- 1805]) dies a few months before her youngest daughter's third birthday, takes place early in 1821 in the Diemtigen village church. Shortly thereafter, their first child, a stillborn son, is born. In January 1823, the second son born to Johannes and Rosina Katharina Kunz is born and given the name Johannes (known to his American descendants as John Kunz II) after his father. John II's great-grandmother, Anna Klossner Klossner (Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz's grandmother) dies that summer at the ancestral family home *auf der Blatten* shortly before her 94th birthday, the oldest citizen of the community of Diemtigen. A third son, Christian Kunz (1826-1904), is born to Johannes and Rosina Katharina Kunz in 1826.

The posterity of "Tschuppis Jakob" [Kunz], as he is known by the inhabitants of Zwischenflueh, continues to develop. In the fall of 1826, Samuel Kunz (1808-1898), a younger brother of Johannes (John I), marries a second cousin (who is the half-sister of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz). The following year, another brother, David Kunz (1807-1880), marries a bride from a neighboring village. Twenty-two year old brother Christian Kunz (1806-1828), who is mute, dies at *Tschuppis* and the family is again bereaved. A few years later, eldest brother Jakob Kunz (1802-1867) marries a widowed distant cousin.

The family of Johannes (John I) and Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz and their two sons increased with the birth of Magdalena Kunz [Wiedmer] (1833-1871), followed by twin daughters, Rosina Kunz [Morrell] (1836-1913) and Katharina Kunz [Roberts] (1836-1907).

One week after his elder daughter (Margaritha Kunz [1811-1850]) marries (Christian Mani [1808-1897]) in the summer of 1837, 62-year old widower "Tschuppis Jakob" [Kunz] remarries. His second wife, Susanna Wiessmueller Weissmueller Zumbrunnen Kunz (1785-1846), is the widow of David Weissmueller of Wimmis and Johannes Zumbrunnen (1769-1836) of Erlenbach in Simmental.

As upright and God-fearing members of the Reformed Church, Jakob and Susanna Kunz continue their practice of reading often in the Bible. According to family tradition, they particularly concern themselves with a comparison between the teachings of their pastor and their own interpretation of the true gospel of Christ as they have understood it through studying the Scriptures. Imbued with their faith, they agree that whichever one dies first will return and inform the remaining partner whether the true Gospel is on the earth!

The fact that upon Jakob Kunz's death at Enetkirel (to where he had moved from *Tschuppis* ) in Zwischenflueh on November 13, 1841, Susanna waited by his coffin to receive his message,

has been passed on to posterity by Johannes Kunz (John I) to his children and grandchildren. Discouraged after three days of waiting to no avail, Susanna expresses her disappointment (exact quotations in Swiss dialect may still be found in old Kunz family records) at Jakob's having failed to bring her the promised report. After uttering her disheartenment she hears the voice of her deceased husband, who tells her that he could not communicate with her until she spoke first and that indeed, "the true gospel *is* on the earth and our posterity will accept it!"

The formal organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Joseph Smith (1805-1844) and his associates in 1830 enables the gradual spreading of the Restored Gospel. Missionaries preach the message of the Restoration in England as of 1837 and baptize several hundred converts in the four following years. Reports of this success apparently reach the Bernese region. Some five months prior to Jakob Kunz's death in Zwischenflueh, Reverend Abraham Samuel Ruefenacht (1800-1886) of the Wattenwil parish warns the General Synod of Canton Bern during its meetings in June 1841 of the new religious denomination. "It is a cause of concern that this Mormonite Sect, probably in conjunction with land speculation, will also attempt to proselyte in Canton Bern, and that agents of the same (one of whom originally Bernese himself, has been personal 1 brought to his [Ruefenacht's] attention) may be gadding about in this area. It is necessary that the clergy maintain a watchful eye over this dangerously cunning form of the selling of souls." Reverend Johann Karl Rudolf Anneler (1804-1877) of the Oberdiessbach parish, "... who [is] also aware of this matter, does not find it so dangerous, inasmuch as the people are fully capable of seeing through such a clumsy deception."

Not quite a year after Jakob Kunz's death, his 19-year old, eldest grandson Johannes (John II) marries Rosina Knutti (1819-1894), a third cousin from the *untere Schlunegg* farm above the hamlet of Schwenden. The 23-year old bride is the daughter of David Knutti (1775-1846), former innkeeper of the *Tiermatti* inn at Schwenden, and his second wife, widow Katharina Mani Mani (1784-1843). Katharina Mani Mani Knutti dies just two months before Rosina Knutti Kunz gives birth to her eldest son, Johannes [John Kunz III] (1844-1918) on the *Blatten*, farm at Zwischenflueh. Christian Kunz, brother of John II, and Susanna Katharina Knutti Klossner (1803- ), half-sister of Rosina Knutti Kunz, are among the godparents who witness John III 's christening in the village church at Diemtigen.

Rosina Kunz [Bischoff Dredge] (1845-1914) (an alleged marriage to Kaspar Merz is an error of genealogist Julius Billeter [1869-1957]), eldest daughter of John II and Rosina Kunz , is born at Zwischenflueh in the fall of 1845. Her godparents are her grandfather, Johannes Kunz (John I), and two aunts, Susanna Knutti [Bruni] (1827-1906) and Magdalena Mani Klossner (1815-1865). On the second day of Christmas in 1846, Christian Kunz (1846-1931) is born at *Grunholz* in Schwenden. David Kunz, brother of John I, from *Tschuppis* and Maria Schwenter Mani (1816-1903), wife of Conssitory Judge Johannes Mani (1810-1871) (half brother of Rosina Knutti Kunz) in Schwenden, are among the godparents at Christian's christening.

Because of their growing family, John II and Rosina Kunz move by the latest during the summer of 1848 to the *Moos* farm in the hamlet of Riedern with their two sons and daughter. Their second daughter, Rosina Katharina Kunz [Bolmer Chivers] (1848-1931), affectionately known by the family as simply Kaeti, is the first to be born there. Susanna Wiedmer Kunz

(1823-1898), wife of John I's youngest brother, Peter Kunz (1816-1895) at Enetkirel, is one of Kaeti's godmothers.

In Utah, Mormon Church President Brigham Young (1801-1877) calls Lorenzo Snow (1814-1901), a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, on a mission to Italy during a general conference of the Church in Salt Lake City in October 1849. Snow and his companion first travel to England, where they call Thomas Brown Holmes Stenhouse (1824-1882) and another new convert to accompany them on their mission. After spending several months among the Waldenses in Torre Pellice, Snow sends Stenhouse to Switzerland in late November 1850. When Snow visits Stenhouse in Geneva in February 1851, he is "... much pleased with the prospect of establishing the Gospel in Geneva. I feel free, and in a free atmosphere and to prophecy good of Switzerland."

From Geneva, Stenhouse takes the gospel to the city of Lausanne, capital of Canton Vaud. One of his earliest converts there is Serge Louis Ballif (1821- 1901), namesake of his godfather, Count Sergei Grigorevich Stroganoff (1794- 1882), the great patron of Russian art, history and education. Count Sergei gains contact with Ballif's father, Jean Francois Frederic Ballif (1774-1848), while the latter serves as private secretary to Armand du Plessis, Duke Richelieu (1766-1822), founder (1794) of the Black Sea port city of Odessa in the Ukraine and Prime Minister of France (1818-21) under Louis XVIII (1755-1824). Serge Louis Ballif's piety is veritably hereditary. His grandfather, Reverend Jean Francois Louis Ballif (1726-1790), preaches in the cathedral in Lausanne, teaches Greek and ethics at the Lausanne Academy and is a leader in a mystical congregation which holds meetings in his home. Both Reverend Ballif's wife and mother come from French Huguenot refugee families in Switzerland.

As a respected, wealthy citizen of Lausanne, Serge Louis Ballif's conversion to the Church is very important to the early development of Mormonism in Switzerland. (After immigrating to Utah in 1854, Ballif returned to Switzerland twice as a missionary, the second time [W1879-81] presiding over the Swiss German Mission. His daughter, Louise Alexandrine Ballif [Benson] W1850-1922], is the paternal grandmother of Church President Ezra Taft Benson, who served as Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower administration W1953-61)).

Another early conversion of historical significance in Lausanne is that of Josephine de La Harpe de Ludert (1813- ), widow of Alexandre de Ludert, Imperial Russian Consul General in Cuba), who after immigrating to Utah becomes the plural wife of Elder Franklin D. Richards (1821-1899) of the Council of Twelve Apostles and later of Octave Ursenbach (1832-1871).

After branches of the Church are established in Geneva, Lausanne and the Neuchatel area in French-speaking Switzerland, Stenhouse, Ballif and Francois Frederic Roulet (1816-1885) take the gospel to the Rhine River city of Basel early in 1853. Shortly thereafter, a branch is established there through the proselyting of George Mayer (1805-1896). When Mayer leaves later that same year to establish the Church in Zuerich, his successor in Basel is Jacob Foutz Secrist (1818-1855).

Enroute to Europe as a missionary in 1852, Secrist stops in his native Pennsylvania to visit his aged parents who are "... too much astonished at my leaving my family [his wife, two daughters



and a son; a second son is born just a few days after Secrist's departure] to be gone from them 3 years and that I was going on a mission ... to preach in the German language, a language I did not understand ..." After laboring a short time in England, Secrist goes to Prussia where upon preaching, he is expelled by the police and flees to the Principality of Saxe-Meiningen. After some success there, he is imprisoned, again expelled for preaching the Gospel and returns to England, where he labors for six months.

After traveling from England via Paris, France, Secrist arrives at Swiss Mission headquarters in Geneva early in November 1853 and meets with Stenhouse and the local Church members. "I found half the congregation [German-speaking], the other half French. I spoke a little in broken manner. I find I have lost the use or in other words I am out of practice, yet I love the language." Upon being assigned a few days later to labor in Basel, Secrist notes, "This forenoon I read in the German. I can begin to read German pretty well. I delight in the German language." [Intellectually stimulated through his confrontation with languages other than English, Secrist reveals a glimpse of his *Weltanschauung* at the end of a lengthy epistle to his family from suburban Basel in a special message to his children. "When I come home I will bring home some German books and teach you all to read German, as a great portion of the earth speak German and there will no doubt yet be many Germans come into the church. My little men must learn English, German and French, then they can travel nearly all over the world without any trouble."]

In May 1854, Secrist comes to the Bernese Oberland to baptize the converts of Peter Brawand (1801-1856), a native of the alpine village of Interlaken who had been converted to the Church in Denmark. Upon returning to his Swiss home, Brawand teaches "the principles of the restoration of the Gospel through the appearance of an angel to Joseph Smith," " ... stirring up the people, putting them in mind of the signs of the times." Brawand's efforts result in several persons desiring to be baptized, however he does "not have authority to baptize." In his first letter from Thun on June 20, 1854, Secrist writes his wife that "I have baptized 11 within two weeks and expect to baptize 6 or 8 more very shortly and a very good prospect ahead - persons two that have means to get along with, yet some are very poor."

On May 28, 1854, Secrist baptizes the first convert in Canton Bern, Elisabeth Galli (1814- ) of Matten near Interlaken. The "Berner-Zeitung" newspaper reports shortly thereafter that a "new apostle ... from the notorious Mormon Sect in America" had performed a baptism in the Interlaken district " ... in the moonlight at night." (Galli's niece, Elisabeth Galli [Hyde] [1840-1920], who joins the Church the following year, later becomes a plural wife of Elder Orson Hyde [1805-1878] of the Council of Twelve Apostles.) Three days later Secrist baptizes Christian Schneider (1779-1860), a lithographer from Uetendorf near Thun. Schneider organizes the first Church meetings at the home of his son-in-law, lithographer and printer Gottlieb Bischoff (1818- ), a burgher of Thull. Margaritha Boss Wampfler (1795-1861), widow of Heimberg schoolmaster Jakob Wampfler (1790-1850), is baptized by Secrist in the creek in Maurachern near Kiesen on June 6th. Five days later, the Bischoffs (Schneider's daughter and son-in-law) are baptized by Secrist in the Aare River near Thun. Two days after their baptism, Secrist baptizes Margaritha Wampfler's sister and daughter in the Kiesen Creek near Maurachern.

After laboring in the Bernese Oberland for two months, Secrist reports "... having baptized 20 that are rejoicing in the truth ... although the priests are crying 'False teacher' ... Among the new converts are tobacco manufacturer Ulrich Buehler (1823-1907) in Gunten and his wife. "Tobaccco-Ueli", as Buehler is known to his associates, became interested in the Church upon receiving a pamphlet from Bischoff in his printing shop, where Buehler allegedly had had cigar labels printed. The Buehlers baptism causes much consternation among the citizens of Gunten and the parishioners of Sigriswil. As a result, the Bernese historian and pastor at Sigriswil, Reverend Karl Howald (1796-1869), energetically tries to hinder further growth of the "Mormon" movement. Early in August, Secrist is ordered to appear before an extraordinary meeting of the Sigriswil Parish Council who declare him "... to be a false teacher, who attempts to lead the weak in faith astray ..." and notify the district authorities in Thun of his activities. In mid-September, the director of the Office of Justice and Police of Canton Bern orders Secrist deported and warns other cantonal police offices about Secrist's proselyting.

The appeal of Buehler, Bischoff and other Church members to cantonal government and American consular authorities in Bern is of no avail. After meeting with Church associates in Geneva, Secrist, although sick, returns to the Bernese region. He receives care in the home of Margaritha Wampfler at Maurachern and upon regaining his strength visits the Church members. "I kept myself hid from strangers and traveled from place to place after night (and as the Saints are very much scattered, frequently walked 12 miles after dark) ..." Mission President Daniel Tyler (1816-1906) comes from Geneva and at a meeting with the newly baptized converts at the Wampfler home in Maurachern sets apart Buehler as the local presiding elder.

When the district authorities in Thun learn that Secrist is still in the area, he is summoned. Through a mistake of the district commissioner's office, Brawand is arrested on National Prayer Day in mid-November instead of Secrist. Upon reporting to the Thun officials, Secrist is told to appear before the government authorities in Bern. Following nine days imprisonment there, Secrist's official deportation is started after he is "... transported by a policeman & never got clear until last evening [six days later] ... at the dividing line of Switzerland and France at Basel."

In a letter to William Budge (1828-1919), Secrist reflects that the "work was going on well in the neighborhood of Thun. 35 are baptized and there are excellent prospects for an ingathering [to Utah], could I have remained. The Saints are yet weak in the faith. As we could very seldom come together, my teachings were from house to house. We never had but 5 or 6 prayer meetings, yet for all this the most of them are good, warmhearted Saints, but nearly all poor. Some of them own property but are in debt for it." From the frontier village of St-Louis, Secrist writes Tyler that he has been deported from the cantons of Bern, Solothurn and Baselland as well as from the city of Basel. In his response, Tyler notes that, "I have received a letter from Brother Buehler, the tobacconist. They are all in good spirits. I have full confidence that he was the right man for the place and I feel assured that you will yet have much joy in the foundation you have laid for although you have been compelled to leave, the truth still remains and will grow and bear fruit in spite of all opposition."



Secrist departs France for England and in the spring of 1855 returns to the United States. As was often the case with returning missionaries, he accepts the assignment as the captain of an immigrant company for the westward trek to Utah. During the journey, a cholera epidemic breaks out among the pioneer party and claims many lives, including Secrist's, who is buried near Kearney, Nebraska.

Prior to accepting the teaching position in the village school at Heimberg near Thun, Jakob and Margaritha Boss Wampfler live in the group of houses *ennet dem Graben* at Oeyen in Zwischenflueh. The conversion of Wampfler's widow, daughter and sister-in-law to Mormonism is bewildering to the inhabitants of the mountain hamlets where Wampfler's parents and grandparents have lived for decades. A similar dismay is experienced by the residents of the community of origin of Margaritha Boss Wampfler, eldest of the four daughters of David Boss (1762-1831) of Ringgoldingen in the parish of Erlenbach in Simmental. Margaritha Wampfler's faithful support and activity in the Church, from its earliest beginnings in the Bernese Oberland until moving to Zuerich and then emigrating, is a cause of much discussion in the parishes of Erlenbach and Diemtigen.

When Secrist is forced to leave Switzerland at the end of 1854, two more sons have joined the family of John II and Rosina Knutti Kunz on the *Moos* farm at Riedern. Samuel Kunz (1851-1927) is born there in 1851; one of the godfathers who witness his christening is Samuel Kunz, brother of Johannes (John I). In the summer of 1853, Johann Gottfried Kunz (1853-1928) is also born at Riedern. Magdalena Kunz [Wiedmer], John II's sister, is his godmother; David Wampfler (1823-1898), nephew of Heimberg schoolmaster Jakob Wampfler, stands as one of Johann Gottfried's godfathers. Less than a year later, David Wampfler's widowed aunt is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ-of Latter-day Saints.

In the years that follow, four further sons are born to John and Rosina Kunz at Riedern. David Kunz (1855-1916) is born in the fall of 1855; his godmother is Susanna Katharina Stucki Kunz (1829-1887), wife of his Uncle Christian Kunz, then living at Wimmis at the mouth of the Simmental canyon. David's godfathers are both from Niederstocken, indicating that John II already has close contact with the inhabitants of that hamlet at the foot of Mt. Stockhorn. On July 1, 1857, Rosina Knutti Kunz gives birth to a stillborn son at Riedern. Two years later, Johann Jakob [Jacob] Kunz (1859-1890) is born on the *Moos* farm; all of his godparents are from the village of Amsoldingen, where John II is presumably working as a cheesemaker. Johann Wilhelm [William] Kunz (1860-1905) is born early in December 1860; his godmother is Rosina Kunz, his father's sister, who lives with her parents on the *Schwand* farm in the narrow canyon above Zwischenflueh.

Exactly when and how the Kunz family learned of Margaritha Boss Wampfler's 1854 baptism is not known. David Wampfler, the contemporary whom John II had selected a year earlier as a godfather to witness Johann Gottfried's christening in the village church at Diemtigen, no doubt only gradually learns of his aunt's baptism and the activity of Church members in the Thun region. Nevertheless, the practices and beliefs of the Mormons continually reoccur as topics of conversation.

In the second letter written to his wife from Thun in the summer of 1854, Secrist mentions that "several remarkable cases of healing on several of the saints since baptism have established them more firmly in the truth." Fanny Warn Stenhouse (1826-1904), wife of the first mission president in Switzerland, tells in her autobiography of the healing of her eldest daughter (Clara Fredretta Stenhouse [Young Montgomery y Agramonte] [1850-1893]) while living in the Ballif home in Lausanne and its impact upon the Saints, they having been "... greatly confirmed in their faith." (In her poem *To Mrs. Stenhouse, Switzerland*, Eliza Roxey Snow Smith Young [1804-1887] includes Fanny Stenhouse among those who "...are counted worthy / toils and sufferings to partake" and whose name is known in honor / by the Saints ...")

Healing of the ill is something of particular interest to Johannes Kunz (John I) and his family inasmuch as twin daughter Rosina suffers from a spinal disease which doctors can neither identify nor cure. Knowing that his sister will be afflicted throughout her lifetime, John II apparently passes hearsay knowledge of the faith healings to his father on the little *Schwand* farm above Zwischenflueh. With a desire to learn more about a church which claims to have such a power of healing, Johannes Kunz (John I) and his daughter Rosina seek after it in Thun. They gain contact with Presiding Elder Ulrich Buehler and listen to the story of the Restoration. Recognizing it to be the truth, they are baptized as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on June 22, 1862, by Buehler. Through the power of the Priesthood manifest in the blessing given to Rosina and through her own faith, she becomes entirely well.

Upon returning to their alpine dairy farm, Johannes (John I) and his daughter sense a very rebellious spirit among many of their friends, neighbors and relatives concerning Mormonism. John Kunz II is particularly disturbed to learn of his father's and sister's acceptance of Mormonism. In December, Rosina Knutti Kunz gives birth to youngest son Johann Robert Kunz (1862-1956) on the *Moos* farm at Riedern. In the christening record, the pastor in Diemtigen notes that John Kunz II is currently engaged as a cheesemaker in Amsoldingen, a village halfway between Thun and Niederstocken. Robert's godparents are David Wiedmer (1833-1891), future husband of his aunt Magdalena Kunz Wiedmer; John Kunz III, his eldest brother, and his aunt Katharina Kunz.

The vast distances between the scattered Church members prevent their coming together often. Nearly a year after Johannes (John I) and his daughter had been baptized, Buehler and a fellow companion decide to visit the Kunz family on the *Schwand* farm above Zwischenflueh. News that the Mormon emissaries are in the Diemtigen canyon spreads quickly. Among a number of the men in the valley who meet and decide to run the Mormon elders out of the canyon is John Kunz II from the *Moos* farm at Riedern. Together they form an angry mob and set out for the Kunz home at *Schwand*.

The door on the *Schwand* house is built in two sections, enabling the top half to be opened without opening the bottom half. Upon hearing the tumult of the group gathered on his farm, Johannes (John I) opens the top half of the door and is confronted by neighbors, relatives and those he thought to be his friends. The disorderly crowd informs Johannes that they want to drive the Mormon missionaries out of the area. Johannes is particularly disturbed to see his son from Riedern among the group and emphatically tells John II to return to his home and family. Johannes then talks to the rest of the mob and finally they leave.

The inhabitants of Zwischenflueh and the Diemtigen canyon remain bitter toward the Mormons but representatives of the Church are able to make visits without being molested. Through the renewed contact with Buehler and other converts, Katharina Kunz, Rosina's twin, decides to also join the Church. She is baptized in Lake Thun on June 12, 1863. Three months later, Buehler baptizes Anna Wampfler Klossner (1802-1867) (a third cousin of Heimberg schoolmaster Jakob Wampfler), the widow of Jakob Klossner (1764-1846) from the neighboring *Blatten* farm (and an uncle of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz at *Schwand*), along with her two daughters (cousins of Johannes Kunz's wife). In the summer of 1864, Jakob Klossner (1838- ), son and brother of the Church member family on the *Blatten* farm is also baptized.

Since 1814, a small but seemingly steady flow of Simmental cheesemakers immigrate to Russia. The majority are employed there by nobility and many gradually become independent and wealthy. In 1863, Jakob Kunz (1831- ) (a second cousin of John Kunz II) from the *Anger* farm in the upper *Rossacker* area of Narrenbach at Zwischenflueh also immigrate with his wife and family to Russia, where he is engaged as a cheesemaker on the estate of a Baltic-German baron. Encouraged by Jakob's success, two brothers, David Kunz (1835-1884) and Christian Kunz (1827- ), and their families immigrate to Russia by 1870. (Only comparably few descendants are able to return to Switzerland at the time of the Russian Revolution.) A number of Rosina Knutti Kunz's second cousins immigrate to Russia, too. One, Luise Mani (1841-1885), marries a Glarnese cheesemaker in 1864 at Dugino (Sychevka District, Smolensk Province), the rural estate of Prince Nicholas Petrovich Meshchersky (1829-1894).

Possibly through family contacts via David Kunz's godfathers or perhaps with the customary moving from place to place as a cheesemaker, John Kunz III makes acquaintance with the Straubhaar family at Niederstocken. Taught "... to work with my hands to sustain life," John III no doubt learns his trade, at least in the early years, directly from his father. Being the eldest of the children on the *Moos* farm at Riedern, John III is "... looked upon by my dearly beloved parents as a great help to them. But to their surprise..." he is drawn to Niederstocken, "... the place of my first love," and when "... a little over twenty years old I got married" on November II, 1864, to Magdalena Straubhaar (1837-1874). Their first two sons, William John Kunz (1865-1952) and Johann Jakob Kunz (1866-1867), are born in the Straubhaar family home at Niederstocken. In 1866, John III and Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz commence "... to keep house together, having each lived more or less with our parents until that time."

In the spring of 1866, John III and Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz and their two sons move to the lower *Blatten* farm at Zwischenflueh which is apparently vacated upon the emigration of Anna Wampfler Klossner and her children to Utah. At the *Blatten* farm, they are close neighbors to John's grandparents and twin aunts at *Schwand*. In the summer of that same year, Ulrich Buehler baptizes 13-year old Johann Gottfried Kunz, the first of John II's large family to be baptized into the Church. Unfortunately, nothing is known of the circumstances surrounding his conversion, but it is particularly significant because it shows the apparent strong influence and activity of the family members already in the Church, as well as the growing division of the family as they affiliate themselves with Mormonism.

In May 1867, Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz gives birth to her first daughter, Rosina Katharina [Rose] Kunz [Eschler], just two days after the death of Johann Jakob, he "... being a corpse in the house at the time." Rosina Kunz [Morrell] from *Schwand* is especially helpful in this time of need and in the following weeks and months, she and the wife of her nephew develop a close friendship. It is therefore certain that Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz, only a few months younger than the twin daughters of Johannes Kunz, gradually learns a lot about the teachings of the Restored Gospel.

The conversion and baptism of Jakob Klossner (1844- ) in the creek *Maenig-grundbach* below the *Schwand* and *Blatten* farms in June 1867 is a further important event. Klossner's deceased mother is Johannes Kunz (John I's) youngest sister; his paternal grandfather is a brother of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz at *Schwand*. Jakob Klossner's baptism brings further posterity of "Tschuppis Jakob" into the Church. The Mormonism which Johannes Kunz (John I) actively exemplifies to his family and neighbors, combined with the patient diligence of the missionaries in keeping close contact with the few Saints in the narrow canyon above Zwischenflueh, result in continued interest in the teachings of the Church. Three weeks after Jakob Klossner's baptism, Susanna Klossner (1842- ), his sister, is baptized into the Church by Ulrich Buehler.

Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz contracts a fever through her father's family that same year, "... being a very sick woman almost unto death for over three months and ... [her] health being ruined through it for the rest of ... [her] days here on earth." During the long illness of John III's wife, his twin aunts on the nearby *Schwand* farm are of immense help to Magdalena Kunz and her infant son and daughter. Through this continued close association, Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz recognizes the truthfulness of the Gospel message.

In the spring of 1868, missionary Willard Brigham Richards (1847-1942) meets with the members of the Thun Branch and ordains Johannes Kunz (John I) to the office of a Priest. When Richards and Mission President Karl Gottfried Maeser (1828-1901) visit Zwischenflueh in November of that year, the humble little *Schwand* farmhouse is the center of activity. Johannes Kunz (John I), 65 years of age, and his twin daughters, nearly 32 years old, are devout members; neither Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz nor her married daughter and two married sons belong to the Church. Johnnn Gottfried Kunz, Johannes' 15-year old grandson on the *Moos* farm at Riedern, and Susanna and Jakob Klossner on the upper *Blatten* farm, Johannes' niece and nephew, are also faithful members of the Church.

Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz desires to attend a meeting at *Schwand* and hear the sermons of the visiting missionaries. In spite of, being filled with a spirit of opposition, the maturity and wisdom of his wife persuades 24-year old John III to accompany her to the nearby home of his grandfather. Even though John III smokes his long pipe so much during the first meeting that the air is clouded with smoke, he is moved by the teachings so ably presented by Maeser (who prior to coming to Europe the previous year to preside over the Church's Swiss and German Mission was engaged as a private tutor to Brigham Young's family). During Maeser's visit on the *Schwand* farm, he ordains Johannes (John I) to the office of an Elder on November 11 th.

Four days later, John III and Magdalena Strauhbaar Kunz acknowledge their testimonies of the truthfulness of the Restored Gospel and decide to join the Church. Maeser baptizes them and Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz in the cold waters of the creek *Maeniggrundbach* just below the farm houses on November 15, 1868, John III " ... claiming that ... [his wife] had been instrumental in bringing indirectly his [own] conversion about as well as that of his grandmother."

The three baptisms kindle much anguish for John II and Rosina Knutti Kunz at Riedern. They are fond of their eldest son and his wife -- Rosina Knutti Kunz stood as godmother at the christening of her grandson, Johann Jakob; John II and his mother are the godparents of John III's daughter, Rose. In an attempt to convince their son of the grave mistake he has made in joining the Mormons, John II and Rosina (according to family tradition) ask John III to come to Riedern and get them a load of wood for the winter. While at their home, they ask John III numerous questions and try to prove from their understanding of the Bible that he has made an error in being baptized. From that which he has learned from the missionaries and through his own studying, John III defends his decision with the scriptures. When John II realizes that his efforts are futile, he becomes angry and raises points based on falsehoods and abuse. Nevertheless, before John III leaves, he bears a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the Restored Gospel.

The sincerity of John II's two sons (John III and Johann Gottfried), his parents and twin sisters touches him sufficiently that he and Rosina agree to meet with the missionaries and listen to what they have to say. Upon receiving the invitation to come to the *Moos* farm, Richards and a local elder make their ways through the mid-winter snow to Riedern. In spite of Richards' broken German and the translations of his companion, John II and Rosina Knutti Kunz understand the message. On February 27, 1869, Richards baptizes them and their 20- year old daughter Kaeti in the icy waters of the *Kirelbach* creek. One month later, 17-year old Samuel and 13-year old David are baptized in the *Maeniggrundbach*.

On July 14, 1869, Magdalena Straubhaar Kunz gives birth to her youngest son, Johannes [Johnny] Kunz (1869-1945), whom Reverend Gabriel Karl Friedrich Stettler (1828-1905) records in the Diemtigen parish registers without a record of christening because "... the father ... belongs to the 'Mormon Sect.'" On that same day, Susanna Klossner Agenstein (1845- ), grandniece of Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz (and daughter of a cousin of Rosina Knutti Kunz) is baptized in the hamlet of Baechlen. Her husband, Gottlieb Agenstein (1824- ), and two of his daughters from his first marriage join the Church in September. In December 1869, Rosina Kunz Bischoff is baptized in the *Kirelbach* creek near her parents' home in Riedern.

Although a large number of inhabitants of the community of Diemtigen emigrate during the first half of the 19th century, John Kunz II apparently does not consider such a possibility. As a respected Simmental-cheesemaker, he could at any time take advantage of the opportunity and immigrate to Russia, as indeed three of his cousins, as well as, for example, a number of the nieces and nephews of Gottlieb Agenstein and practically innumerable other friends and associates from the community do. Aware of the immigration to Utah of earlier Church converts, John II allegedly stipulates at the time of his conversion that he will be baptized only upon condition that he not be asked to emigrate from Switzerland.



Although he vigorously opposed joining the Church, John II experiences a change in spirit and becomes a staunch supporter of the doctrines which are at first new to him. Similarly, he and his wife soon feel of the Spirit of Gathering and begin making plans to emigrate. In May 1870, 23-year old Christian, 10-year old Jacob and 9-year old William are baptized prior to leaving Switzerland. In accordance with the teachings of the Church they have embraced, 7-year old Robert is not baptized because of not yet having reached the age of eight.

At the beginning of July 1870, 47-year old John Kunz II bids goodbye to his aged parents at *Schwand*, to his married son and daughter -- all of whom are members of the Church, and to his sister and brother and their families, as well as other relatives, neighbors and friends. Along with his wife and their eight single children, they leave the *Moos* farm at Rierdern to immigrate to Utah. John II's twin sisters, Susanna Klossner from the upper *Blatten* farm and Gottlieb Agenstein and his wife and family are also in the emigrant group.

The emigrants meet in Basel at the Red Ox Inn on July 5th and depart the next morning via railroad for Mannheim, where they arrive that same evening and are joined by several German Saints from the Munich and Dresden areas. On July 7th, the emigrant party boards the Rhine steamer *Viktoria*, with which they travel to Duesseldorf. After changing boats there, they continue to Rotterdam and stop at the City of Antwerp Inn. On Saturday evening, July 9th, they board the steamer *Lord Cardigan* and cross the English Channel, arriving in Grimsby on Monday morning. They leave Grimsby shortly thereafter, arrive in Liverpool that same evening about 5 p.m. and are permitted to embark at once on the ship *Manhattan* which sails for New York on July 13th.

News of the arrival of the emigrants in Utah, their privilege of personally meeting and shaking hands with the entire First Presidency (Brigham Young and Councilors George Albert Smith [1817-1875] and Daniel Hamner Wells [1814- 1891]) in Farmington and settling for that first winter at Logan in Utah's Cache Valley (near cousin Susanna Klossner Herzog [1834-1906] and her family) is a source of great comfort to Johannes and Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz as well as to John III and Magdalena Kunz and the other members of the Church near Zwischenflueh. Johannes Kunz (John I), in accordance with the opinion of the time, is particularly grateful "... for seeing the deliverance from Babylon of such a large number all at once... of his nearest blood relatives."

In the months that follow, John III baptizes a number of converts and otherwise spends considerable time in behalf of the tiny Simmental Branch under the leadership of his grandfather. The events surrounding one of the baptisms performed by John III is cause of a special report by Mission President Edward Schoenfeld: "Two weeks ago, one of our Travelling Elders was up in the mountains of the 'Bernese Oberland, ' where the 'cracks and peaks' remind one that Israel has to be hunted out from amongst the rocks and caves. As he was preaching there, the unruly son of the landlord was trying hard to interrupt and to break up the meeting. Not four days, however, from the time the Elder left, I received a letter (in haste) stating that the same boy was sick, given up by the doctors, left without hope to recover, and he wished for baptism, as he repented of his sins. I could not have reached the place in less than two days travel, besides, I had other appointments out, therefore I telegraphed to another Elder,



who, instead of going the regular road (ten hours walk) took a mountain path (five hours') over the Alpine snowfields, where the chamois roam. There he had to travel through snow in places up to his arms. But he having at times been engaged in chamois hunting, and being acquainted with the dangerous paths in those regions, filled his engagement, reached the [17-year old] boy, [Johann Peter Roethlisberger at Saanenmoeser,] took him to the creek, where high waters carried heavy rocks with a thunderlike roaring, baptized and confirmed him [on October 31, 1870,] and left him the next day, after bearing his testimony, restored to perfect health. I saw the Elder a few days ago. He told me that gold could not have induced him to go that same road back, he preferred the ten hour walk, where, however, the high water, in consequence of recent heavy rains, had taken away the road in places, so that he had to wade several times knee deep in water. The name of that noble Elder is Johannes Kunz, a son of one of the same name who emigrated this year with his large family to the Valley."

During the winter, Johannes (John I) contracts pneumonia, which causes his passing on February 17, 1871, at the age of 67. It is difficult to sense the division of the otherwise close family as they gather for the funeral service, the first in the community of Diemtigen not to be conducted by the Reformed Church pastor. In the cortege that follows the horse drawn casket down the precipitous canyon path to the cemetery at Zwischenflueh, Johannes' non-Mormon children and grandchildren mingle with John III and Magdalena as well as with the mixed congregation of Mormon and Reformed Church relatives and friends. Five-year old William [John] Kunz, John III's eldest son, sits on top of his great-grandfather's casket inasmuch as he is too little to walk the long, steep mountain path to the cemetery.

The little Simmental Branch is again diminished in 1872 through the emigration of further converts whom John III had baptized. Membership records bear witness of his active roll in the Church in the Bernese Oberland, in spite of making plans to immigrate with his own family to the Bear Lake Valley in southern Idaho, where John Kunz II and his family have settled. At the beginning of July 1873, 70-year old Rosina Katharina Klossner Kunz bids her son and granddaughters farewell and accompanied by John III, Magdalena and their three children, they leave Zwischenflueh. On July 2nd, they are in Niederstocken and John baptizes two more converts, one of them being Sophia Straubhaar (1846-1893), Magdalena's younger sister (whom John marries a year later; in Utah, following the death of his first wife). After saying goodbye to the Straubhaar family and friends, the emigrants leave to continue their journey to the United States.

In the summer of 1875, Rosina Kunz Bischoff and her husband and family also emigrate, they being the last of the immediate family from Zwischenflueh to join the earlier immigrants in Idaho and Utah. That same summer, Margaritha Kunz Tueller (1836-1910), daughter of "Tschuppis Jakob's" son Samuel, joins the Church with her family. When they emigrate from Boltigen in 1884, a third large branch of posterity of "Tschuppis" Jakob Kunz takes root in the Rocky Mountains.

In reflecting upon this Swiss background, the sacrifices made by these fore-bearers over a century ago prove to be the very foundation on which their posterity may gain in faith and devotion, education and prosperity. In spite of much persecution from relatives and friends, these ancestors listen to the message of the Restored Gospel and then embrace it through

baptism. They provide a part of the American heritage of their future posterity by following the Spirit of Gathering and forsaking their beautiful, native homeland in the Alps and going to a foreign country to start a new life among strangers. Because of their striving to keep the commandments of God and making the Gospel a part of their daily lives, their descendants continue to partake of virtually innumerable blessings.